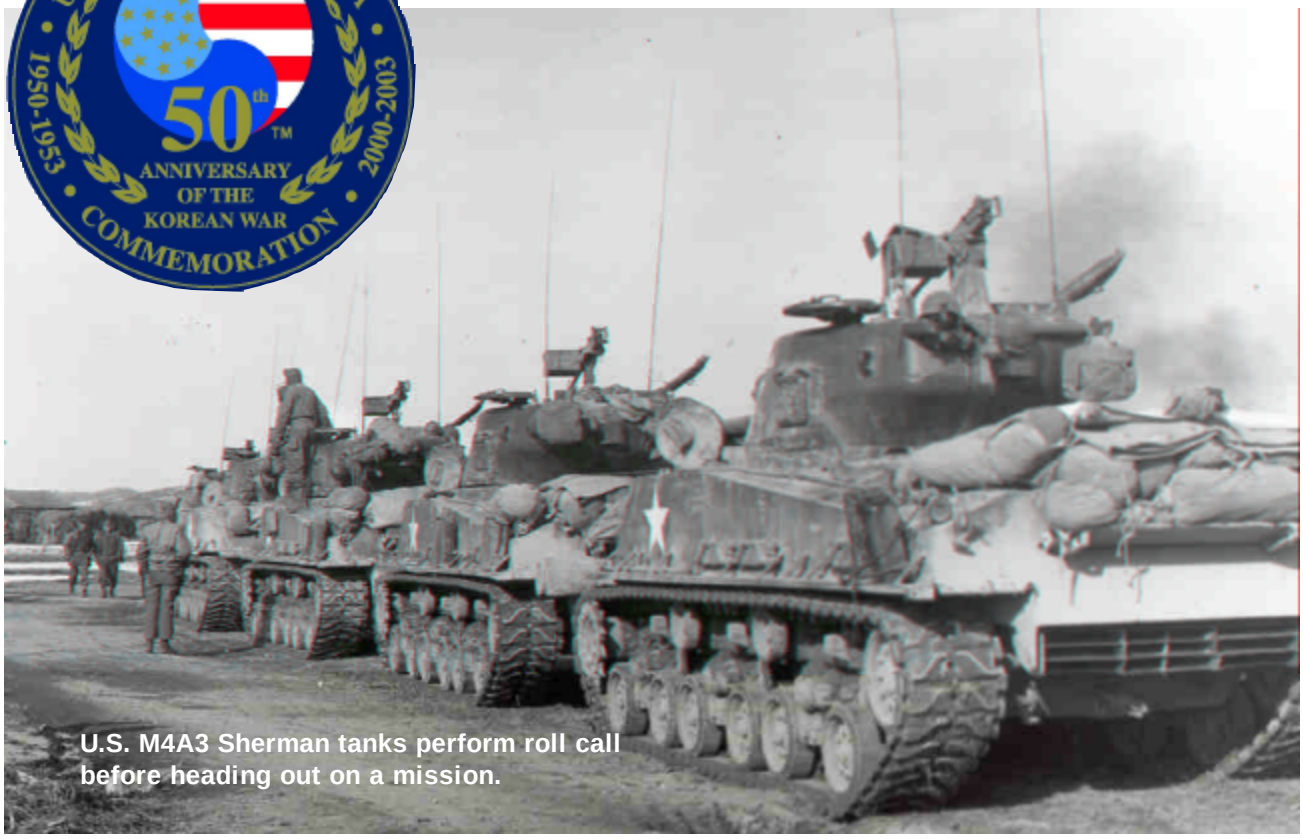
FACT SHEET



U.S. M4A3 Sherman tanks perform roll call before heading out on a mission.

Armor of the Korean War

It is a dictum of modern war that armor and infantry be employed as a team in battle. Infantrymen and tanks provide mutual support and protection. Tanks without accompanying infantry are vulnerable to enemy tank-killer weapons; infantry without accompanying tanks is vulnerable to small arms, machine guns and other direct-fire weapons. Infantrymen protect the tanks from the tank killers and the tanks engage enemy direct-fire weapons. Armor offensive tactics also envision armor employed in large formations, en masse, to overwhelm an enemy and make deep penetrations.

But armor in Korea was rarely used in this fashion, especially after the war became one of position and stalemate. The mountainous terrain and narrow valleys of Korea, and, in the spring and summer, flooded rice paddies, made it difficult to employ more than a few tanks in one location. Attempts to employ them in larger concentrations invariably led to a number of the tanks becoming bogged down.
The North Korean People's Army (NKPA), particularly early in the war, failed to send infantry along with its tanks in the attack. As a result, once the United States and Republic of Korea Army (ROKA, South Koreans) obtained the 3.5-inch bazooka rocket launcher, communist tank losses soared. This, coupled with heavy armor losses from United Nations Command (UNC) air attacks, ended the threat of NKPA armor.

enemy positions. Worked to the tops of hills, these mobile "pill boxes" could be dug in, and they proved highly effective in that role.

The NKPA and Chinese People's Volunteer Army (CPVA, Chinese communist) during the Korean War employed the Russian-built T-34/85 tank, reputed to be one of the best tanks in World War II. They also utilized the BA-64 armored car. United Nations (U.N.) forces employed the U.S. M-24 light tank; the M4A3 (Sherman), with some variants; the M-26 (Pershing); the M-46 (Patton) tanks; and the British Churchill, Centurion, and some Cromwell tanks. Early in the war, South Korean and U.S. forces used a few M-8 (Greyhound) armored cars. The U.S. Army also used the M-29C Weasel cargo carrier, M-39 armored personnel carriers (APCs), and M-20 armored cars.

Because there were a number of models and variants for each of the tanks discussed below, it is difficult to list specifications that are true of each major type of tank. What follows are typical specifications and characteristics and do not necessarily describe mutations resulting from model changes and other variants.

North Korea and China

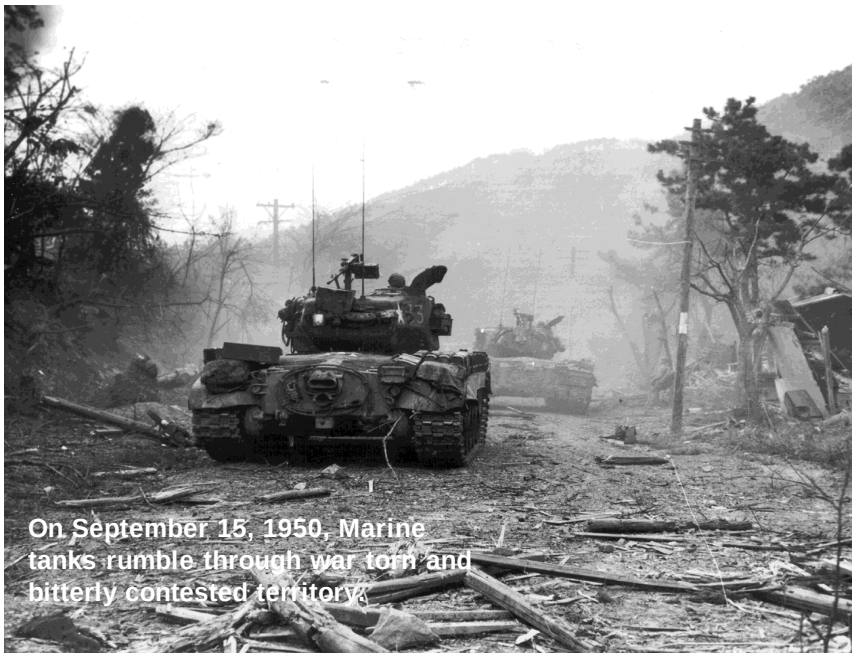
T-34/85. This model evolved from the T-34/76, which was equipped with a 76-mm gun. The North Korean People's Army was reported to have 150 T34/85 tanks at the beginning of the Korean War.

Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 85 mm
Machine guns: two 7.62 mm (one in bow and one coaxially with the main gun)
Weight (combat loaded): 35 short tons
Length (not including gun): 19 feet 7 inches
Width (overall): 9 feet 10 inches
Height to top of turret: 7 feet 11 inches
Armor: turret front, 90 mm; hull front, 47 mm; hull rear, 60 mm
Ammunition carried: 55 rounds for main gun; 2,745 rounds for 7.62.
Engine: 12-cylinder diesel, 493 hp
Maximum speed: 31–34 mph
Armor penetration at 500 yards: 114 mm
Range: 86 miles
Fording depth: 4 feet 4 inches
Vertical obstacle: 2 feet 5 inches
Trench crossing: 8 feet 2 inches

United States

M4A3 and M4A3E8 (Sherman). This tank was the mainstay of U.S. armor during World War II. There were many models and variants of the basic design, including dozers, 105-mm howitzers, rocket launchers, retrievers, flamethrowers, etc. M4A3E8 models carried a small metal box affixed to the right rear, containing an EE-8 sound-powered telephone, enabling an infantryman to communicate with the tank commander.

Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 76 mm
Machine guns: two .30 caliber, one of which was mounted in the bow and the other coaxially with the main gun. One .50-caliber antiaircraft gun, mounted on the top of the turret
Weight (combat loaded): 37 tons
Length (not including gun): 24 feet
Width (overall): 9 feet 10 inches
Height to top of turret: 9 feet 9 inches
Armor: turret front, 2.5 inches, plus a gun shield of 3.5 inches (6 inches overall); hull front, tapered from 2.5 inches at the top to 4.5 inches at the bottom; hull sides and rear, 1.5 inches
Ammunition carried: officially, 71 rounds for main gun; 6,150 rounds for .30 caliber; 600 rounds for .50 caliber
Engine: Ford 500-hp gasoline



On September 15, 1950, Marine tanks rumble through war torn and bitterly contested territory.

Maximum speed: 26 mph
Armor penetration: HVAP (High velocity armor piercing) 5.3 inches at 1000 yards; other ammunition, 3.5 inches at 1,000 yards
Range: 100 miles
Fording depth: 3 feet
Vertical obstacle: 2 feet
Trench crossing: 7 feet 6 inches

M-26 (Pershing). The M-26 was developed near the end of World War II and is classified as a heavy tank.
Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 90 mm
Machine guns: two .30 caliber, one in the bow and one coaxially with the main gun. One .50-caliber anti-aircraft gun mounted atop the turret
Weight (combat loaded): 46 tons
Length (not including gun): 21 feet 2 inches
Width (overall): 11 feet 6 inches
Height (to top of turret): 9 feet 1 inch
Armor: turret front, 102 mm; minimum elsewhere, 13 mm
Ammunition carried: 70 rounds for the 90-mm gun; 5,000 rounds of .30 caliber; 550 rounds of .50 caliber
Engine: Ford 500-hp gasoline
Maximum speed: 25 mph
Armor penetration: 195 mm at 1,000 yards
Range: 100 miles
Fording depth: 4 feet
Vertical obstacle: 3 feet 10 inches
Trench crossing: 7 feet 11 inches

M-46 (Patton). The M-46, an improved model of the M-26, was developed just after the end of World War II.
Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 90 mm
Machine guns: two .30 caliber, one mounted in the bow, the other coaxially with the main gun; one .50-caliber anti-aircraft gun mounted atop the turret
Weight (combat loaded): 48.5 tons
Length (not including gun): 20 feet 10 inches
Width (overall): 11 feet 6 inches
Height to top of turret: 9 feet 3 inches
Armor: turret front, 102 mm; minimum of 13 mm elsewhere
Ammunition carried: 70 rounds for the 90 mm; 5,000 of .30 caliber and 550 rounds of .50 caliber
Engine: Continental 810-hp gasoline
Maximum speed: 31–37 mph
Armor penetration: 195 mm at 1,000 yards

An M26 Pershing tank grinds along a narrow mountain road.

Range: 80 miles
Fording depth: 4 feet
Vertical obstacle: 3 feet
Trench crossing: 8 feet 6 inches

M-24 (Chaffee). This was a light tank, employed by reconnaissance units. However, in the U.S. Army divisions in Japan before the war, it was the only type of tank available and all of them were in what was supposed to be the divisional heavy tank battalions. Each division had about 15 to 17 M-24 tanks at the time.
Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 75 mm
Machine guns: two .30 caliber, one in the bow, the other mounted coaxially with the main gun. One .50-caliber anti-aircraft mounted atop turret
Weight (combat loaded): 20.25 tons
Length (not including gun): 16 feet 6 inches
Width (overall): 9 feet 8 inches
Height (to top of turret): 8 feet 1 inch
Armor: 38 mm turret front; minimum of 10 mm elsewhere
Ammunition carried: 48 rounds for 75 mm; 3,750 rounds for .30 caliber; 440 rounds for .50 caliber
Engine: two Cadillac V-8s, 110 hp, gasoline
Maximum speed: 35 mph

Armor penetration: 70 mm at 500 yards
Range: 110 miles
Fording depth: 3 feet 4 inches
Vertical obstacle: 3 feet
Trench crossing: 8 feet

M-8 Armored Car. This was the heaviest armored vehicle in the ROK Army at the beginning of the war. It had 27 of them. U.S. reconnaissance units also had a few of these cars at the time.

Crew: 4 men
Main gun: 37 mm
Machine guns: one .30-caliber mounted coaxially; one .50-caliber anti-aircraft gun mounted atop the turret
Weight (combat loaded): 8.75 tons
Length: 16 feet 5 inches
Width (overall): 8 feet 4 inches
Height (including machine gun): 7 feet 4½ inches
Armor: 20-mm turret front; minimum of 3 mm elsewhere
Ammunition carried: 80 rounds for 37-mm; approximately 3,000 for .30 caliber and 400 rounds for the .50 caliber
Engine: Hercules 6 cylinder gasoline, 79 hp
Maximum speed: 56 mph
Armor penetration: 48 mm at 500 yards
Range: 300–350 miles
Fording depth: 2 feet 8 inches
Vertical obstacle: 1 foot

British

United Kingdom forces fighting in Korea employed the Churchill Infantry tank and the heavy Centurion. The British also used the A27M Cromwell and A34 Comet tanks in Korea. Canadians brought M10 Achilles 17-pounder self-propelled guns but soon replaced them with U.S. Sherman tanks.

Churchill VII Infantry Tank. Variants included ones mounting a 95-mm howitzer, flamethrower, bridge layer, mortar and recovery vehicles. Most used in Korea were the Mark III.

Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 75 mm
Machine guns: two light, one mounted forward in the hull, the other coaxially with the main gun
Weight (combat loaded): 44.8 tons
Length (not including gun): 24 feet 5 inches
Width (overall): 9 feet
Height (to top of turret): 11 feet 4 inches
Armor: turret front, 152 mm; minimum 25 mm elsewhere
Ammunition carried: 84 rounds for 75 mm; amount for machine guns unknown
Engine: Bedford twin-six gasoline, 350 hp
Maximum speed: 15.5 mph
Armor penetration: 68 mm at 500 yards
Range: 90 miles
Fording depth: 3 feet 4 inches
Vertical obstacle: 2 feet 6 inches
Trench crossing: 10 feet

Centurion Medium (Cruiser) Mk-5. Variants include 105-mm gun, armored recovery, bridge layer and 165-mm demolition charge projector engineer. Its heavy weight (58 tons) and width (11 feet) made it too heavy and too wide for most bridges in South Korea.

Crew: 4 men
Main gun: 20 pounder (83.4-mm) gun
Machine guns: two .30 caliber, one on commander's cupola and one coaxially with main gun. In addition this model carried two six-barreled smoke dischargers.
Weight (combat loaded): 58 tons
Length (not including gun): 24 feet 9½ inches
Width (overall): 11 feet 11½ inches
Height (to top of turret): 9 feet 7¾ inches
Armor: 152 mm on turret front
Ammunition carried: 64 rounds for 20 pounder;

A tank retriever removes the damaged turret from a M4A3 Sherman tank.

4,250 rounds for machine guns
Engine: Rolls Royce Meteor 4B, 12-cylinder gasoline, 650 hp
Maximum speed: 21.5 mph
Armor penetration: approximately 120 mm at 500 yards
Range: 60 miles
Fording depth: 4 feet 9 inches (could be prepared to ford 9 feet)
Vertical obstacle: 3 feet
Trench crossing: 11 feet

Cromwell A27M Reconnaissance. Originally produced near the end of World War II and outclassed by German armor from the start of its production, it was nonetheless very reliable.
Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 75 mm
Machine guns: two light, one firing forward from the turret, the other in the bow
Weight: 28 tons
Armor: 76 mm
Engine: Rolls Royce V-12 Meteor, 600 hp
Maximum speed: 40 mph

Comet A34 Heavy Cruiser. The Comet entered service immediately after the Cromwell at the end of World War II.
Crew: 5 men
Main gun: 76.2 mm, but known as a 77 mm
Machine guns: two light, one coaxial and the other in the bow
Weight: 33 tons
Armor: 101 mm
Engine: 600 hp
Maximum speed: 29 mph

—Uzal W. Ent

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